We Claim:

1   1. A data processing method comprising:

2   creating a machine readable, abstract descriptive data structure;

3 and

4   using the representation to interoperate with at least one rights

5 management data structure.

1   2. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2 step of formatting at least one part of at least one rights management

3 data structure at least in part in accordance with the descriptive data

4 structure.

1   3. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2 step of formatting display of at least one part of at least one rights

3 management data structure at least in part in accordance with the

4 descriptive data structure.

1   4. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2 step of formatting reading of at least one part of at least one rights

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3   management data structure at least in part in accordance with the

4   descriptive data structure.

1   5. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2   step of displaying at least a part of at least one rights management

3   data structure based at least in part on the descriptive data structure.

1   6. A method as in claim 1 wherein the creating step includes

2   the step of providing metadata within the descriptive data structure,

3   and the displaying step comprises displaying at least some

4   information from the rights management data structure at least in part

5   in accordance with the metadata.

1   7. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2   step of dynamically generating a user interface based at least in part

3   on the descriptive data structure.

1   8. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2   step of automatically identifying and/or locating at least one data

3   field at least in part based on the descriptive data structure.

1   9. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2   step of automatically extracting data within the rights management

3   data structure based at least in part on the descriptive data structure.

1   10. A method as in claim 1 wherein the creating step

2   comprises creating a descriptive data structure that is independent of

3   any particular rights management data structure but abstractly

4   describes a class of rights management data structures.

1   11. A method as in claim 1 wherein the creating step includes

2   the step of creating metadata for defining at least one characteristic of

3   the using step.

1   12. A method as in claim 1 wherein the creating step includes

2   the step of creating the abstract representation at least in part by using

3   a wizard, the operation of the wizard being defined at least in part by

4   a further descriptive data structure.

1   13. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2   step of altering the behavior of a polymorphous process at least in

3   part based on the descriptive data structure.

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1   14. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2   step of interpreting at least part of the descriptive data structure at run

3   time.

1   15. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes the

2   step of dynamically adapting at least part of data processing of the

3   rights management data structure at run time.

1   16. A method as in claim 1 wherein the using step includes

2   using at least part of the descriptive data structure as instructions for

3   driving and automated digital content handler.

1   17. A method as in claim 1 wherein the creating step includes

2   the step of creating at least one integrity constraint, and the using step

3   includes the step of enforcing the integrity constraint.

1   18. In a rights management data processing architecture of the

2   type including a secure electronic appliance that interacts with an

3   application through an interface, a method of interoperating with

4   secure electronic containers comprising the following steps:

5   (a) delivering an abstract data structure representation to the

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6   application;

7   (b) generating container access requests with the application

8   based at least in part on the abstract data structure representation; and

9   (c) accessing the container with the secure electronic appliance

10   at least in part based on the container access requests the container

11   generates.

1   19. A method as in claim 18 further including the steps of:

2   (d) providing, with the secure electronic appliance, information

3   from the container to the application; and

4   (e) processing the provided information at least in part in

5   accordance with the abstract data structure representation.

1   20. A method as in claim 19 wherein the processing step (e)

2   includes the step of processing the provided information in

3   accordance with metadata provided within the abstract data structure

4   representation.

1   21. A method of creating and using a secure container

2   comprising:

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3   (a) defining a descriptive data structure that generically defines

4   a class of interoperable, compatible container structures;

5   (b) using the descriptive data structure to create at least one

6   secure container;

7   (c) distributing the descriptive data structure to plural

8   electronic appliances; and

9   (d) interoperating with the secure container at said plural

10   electronic appliances by at least in part using the descriptive data

11   structure to locate and/or specify information within the secure

12   container.

1   22. A method as in claim 21 wherein the descriptive data

2   structure corresponds to an atomic transaction, and the method

3   further includes the step of performing the atomic transaction at least

4   one of said plural electronic appliances at least in part in accordance

5   with the descriptive data structure.

1   23. A method as in claim 21 further including the step of

2   independently using and/or providing controls relating to the

3   descriptive data structure.

1   24. A method as in claim 21 further including the step of

2   defining at least one class of descriptive data structure based on at

3   least one parameter.

1   25. A descriptive data structure comprising:

2   first data that at least in part establishes an association between

3   the descriptive data structure with at least one rights management

4   data structure;

5   second data that locates at least some information within the

6   associated rights management data structure; and

7   metadata that at least in part describes at least one

8   characteristic of use and/or access of the rights management data

9   structure.

1   26. A descriptive data structure as in claim 25 wherein the

2   metadata includes at least one integrity constraint.

1   27. A method of achieving a degree of compatibility with at

2   least one secure environment comprising:

3   (a) creating a descriptive data structure;

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4   (b) associating the descriptive data structure with at least one

5   object; and

6   (c) presenting the object and associated descriptive data

7   structure to the secure environment; and

8   (d) interoperating with the presented object at least in part

9   based on the descriptive data structure.

1   28. A method as in claim 27 wherein step (d) includes the step

2   of selectively interoperating with the presented object based on the

3   degree to which the secure environment can trust the source of the

4   object and/or the descriptive data structure.